

DECISION MEMO

Arapahoe Basin Ski Area

High Noon Sand Shed Construction and Il Refugio Expansion

USDA Forest Service

White River National Forest, Dillon Ranger District

Summit County, Colorado

March 4th, 2020

BACKGROUND

Arapahoe Basin Ski Area (A-Basin) has proposed to construct a sand storage shed in the High Noon parking lot and to expand the Il Refugio Restaurant by enclosing the current deck and building a new deck of similar size. Both projects are within the A-Basin Special Use Permit (SUP) area. The proposed projects are consistent with goals and objectives identified in A-Basin's Master Development Plan (MDP). For more information, visit the project website at the following link: http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=57387.

DECISION

Based on project scoping and analysis conducted, it is my decision to authorize A-Basin to construct a sand storage shed in the High Noon parking lot and to expand the Il Refugio restaurant. These improvements will allow A-Basin to manage the parking lots more efficiently, improve guest safety, and provide improved on-mountain dining experience for Il Refugio guests.

These project areas have been reviewed by Forest Service specialists for impacts to relevant resources, including cultural resources, botany, wildlife, and wetlands; no significant impacts were identified. The analysis for this project is documented in a project file maintained by the Dillon Ranger District. The projects are consistent with management direction provided by the Forest Plan as well as the specific standards and guidelines established for Management Area 8.25 – ski areas. The 2018 White River National Forest Mountain Sports General Design Criteria will apply to these projects.

Total ground disturbances on National Forest System Lands associated with both projects combined will be approximately 0.05 acres or 2,220 square feet. There will be no tree removal required for either project.

High Noon Sand Shed

Prior to the authorization and construction of the High Noon Sand Shed, A-Basin stored sand used for parking lot ice management in an open-air, three-sided containment area consisting of concrete jersey barriers located in the northeast corner of the High Noon Parking Lot. The storage of sand in a fully enclosed building will allow A-Basin to keep the sand dry, reduce maintenance on equipment and reduce stored sand migration into parking lot drainage infrastructure. The footprint of the building will be approximately 14ft by 24ft with a height of 16ft.

The location of the sand shed will be entirely in the pre-disturbed footprint of the High Noon parking lot. There will be no impacts to wetlands and it will be constructed outside of the water influence zone (WIZ), at least 100 feet from the North Fork of the Snake River.

The building will be subject to the White River National Forest Facility Design Review process. Architectural plans will be reviewed by the Forest Service prior to construction. It will be built to match existing buildings in the area with white stucco walls trimmed with green wood. It will be located in the corner of the High Noon parking lot mostly out of sight of the A-Basin base area and Highway 6.

Il Refugio Expansion

Il Refugio restaurant is located at the top on A-Basin and is attached to the Snow Plume Refuge ski patrol headquarters building. Il Refugio restaurant was originally constructed during the summer of 2017 under the approval of the *2016 Arapahoe Basin Ski Area Projects EIS*. This EIS, which this project tiers to, approved the expansion of the Snow Plume Refuge, removal of the Norway lift and associated grading in the area. This second expansion of Il Refugio and construction of a new deck would be entirely within the area graded during the removal of the Norway Lift and 2017 Snow Plume Refuge expansion.

Prior to this expansion, Il Refugio seated 32 guests inside and approximately 20 guests outside. During peak operating hours this amount of seating and space does not accommodate visitor demand. This expansion will include enclosing the existing deck to double the interior seating capacity to 64, and construction of new deck approximately 14ft by 16ft, which will preserve the outside seating capacity of 20. The increase in seating capacity and square footage is consistent with upgrade plans identified in the A-Basin MDP. This new deck will also preserve a seating and dining area with unique views of the East Wall. Beneath the deck, there will be an enclosed cold storage area utilized by food and beverage and mountain operations.

The exterior of the Il Refugio expansion will be consistent with the existing design of Snow Plume Refuge. Architectural plans will be reviewed by the Forest Service prior to construction.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

Decisions may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA) when they are within one of the categories identified by the USDA in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or the proposed action is within a category listed in 36 CFR 220.6 (d) and (e), and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect. I have determined that these projects are consistent with the category 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(3), “*Approval, modification or continuation of minor special uses on NFS lands that require less than 5 contiguous acres of land.*”

It is my determination that the aforementioned projects within the A-Basin SUP area will result in minimal impacts to National Forest resources as discussed below. I find no extraordinary circumstances related to this decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect. Prior to implementation, Forest Service resource specialists will further review the approved projects for field fitting, as necessary.

Therefore, I have decided to authorize these projects without further analysis and documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The following resource conditions were considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances related to the project I am authorizing warranted further analysis and documentation in an EIS or an EA (36 CFR 220.6(b)(i-vii)).

- **Threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat:** No threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat will be adversely affected by the proposed projects.
- **Floodplains and wetlands:** Both proposed projects will not occur in or effect any floodplains or wetlands.
- **Municipal watersheds:** Municipal Watersheds will not be affected.
- **Congressionally designated areas:** No actions will occur within congressionally designated areas.
- **Inventoried roadless areas and research natural areas:** No actions will occur within any inventoried roadless areas or research natural areas.
- **Native American religious or cultural sites, archeological sites or historic properties or areas:** There are no known Native American religious or cultural sites, archeological

sites, or historic properties or areas within the proposed project locations which are in a parking lot and previously graded area of a lift terminal.

SCOPING/PUBLIC INVOLVMENT

This project was posted on the Forest Service Schedule of Proposed Action on January 2, 2020 and a project web site was created on the White River National Forest projects page.

Internal Forest Service scoping occurred and no issues were identified. There is no reason to suspect that implementation of this action will be controversial or result in any adverse effects.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

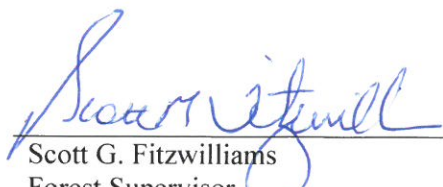
This decision is consistent with the Forest Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act. These projects were designed in conformance with appropriate Forest Plan standards and guidelines for Management Area 8.25 – Ski Areas.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL AND IMPLEMENTATION

This decision is not subject to appeal or objection. Implementation may occur in accordance with the 2018 White River National Forest Mountain Sports Program General Design Criteria.

CONTACT PERSON

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Marcus Dreux, Mountain Sports Ranger, Dillon Ranger District, White River National Forest by telephone at (970) 262-3443 or by email at marcus.dreux@usda.gov



Scott G. Fitzwilliams
Forest Supervisor
White River National Forest

3/4/2020
Date

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